

COOKS RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19



Candles on the river 2019

Photo courtesy Christopher Woe

COOKS RIVER VALLEY



association

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CRVA Progress Report

Ann Leahy, Gareth Wreford & Jennifer Newman

We begin our Annual Report acknowledging Country. Flowing east, the Cooks River Valley traverses Wangal, Gadigal and Gameygal Country. The river catchment and flow has nourished generations since the beginning of time, and has flourished with the care taken by those who have lived with the river. Today, we work together to refresh and revitalise the Cooks River, mindful of our non-human residents who return to Country in increasing numbers in return for the physical, social and spiritual nourishment we receive from the River and its' surrounds. We are all Cooks River people caring for Country in the Cooks River Valley.

Every year when we put the annual report together, we're always flabbergasted by the impressive amount of work being done by all the different and growing groups under the banner of the Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA). It's always a pleasant surprise to see all this work summarised in this report, showing how many wonderful and dedicated volunteers give up their time and effort to make the river a better place. It is true that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, one clean-up, one weeding bee, one cuppa, one bird watching walk all add up to the combined work of the CRVA.

We find that many people are still unclear on the relationship between the Mudrabs groups and the CRVA. In essence, the CRVA is an incorporated association made up of caring local residents who are committed to rehabilitating the Cooks River and fostering community spirit within the Cooks River Valley which has been in existence since the 1930s. The CRVA is the umbrella organisation that holds the insurances and finances for our volunteer group the Mudcrabs, who do bush regeneration on dedicated bush sites and regular clean ups, and the Crab Walking (street clean-ups designed to stop the rubbish before it goes into the river). The Mudcrabs are the people you see on weekends in blue T-shirts, digging, mulching, planting and dragging rubbish out of the river. This is always followed by a friendly group morning or afternoon tea.

We've had a great year of expansion in 2018/19, with numerous new bush regeneration sites along the river, a new bird-watching group aptly called the Mudlarks, as well as celebrations and combined activities with other organisations. Here are some of the main activities which have taken place during the year.

Candles on the River:

Held in March during Earth Hour, this event is a wonderful way to celebrate the river and community and always draws big crowds. Families and children make hundreds of small paper boats, which they decorate, then we dip them in wax to keep them afloat, fit each one with a small tea-light candle and launch these out onto the river at dusk. We couldn't go ahead without the marvellous volunteers from the River Canoe Club, who gather in their canoes on the water at Steel Park, ready to help the little flotilla of boats out into the river, and most importantly to



Candles on the river

photo by Christopher Woe

gather them up afterwards to prevent any litter remaining on the river or on the banks. We had a huge turn out this year, with over 300 little boats being made, but unfortunately it was one of the windiest afternoons of the year, and try as we might the candles would not stay alight and the little boats were all blown back to shore. However, this did nothing to dampen the community spirit, a local musician, AJ, bravely played on and families still held their picnics on the banks of the river in the cold and blowing wind. Let's hope for a perfect day next year!

Beat the Bottle:

Beat the Bottle is a great initiative by Sydney Water to try to end single use plastics whilst educating the community and turning this into a big party at the same time. These have been held with great success on Sydney beaches, but this was the first one to be held in a river location. This took place in May at Ewen Park, with stalls, free



coffee for volunteers and a fabulous band called Jungle Beats who entertained the kids and also provided a fabulous musical accompaniment to our rubbish collections along the river banks. Other groups such as the Cooks River Alliance also helped out on the day, so as well as being fun we collected a huge amount of plastic and other rubbish from the river.

Paddle against Plastic

The following week an even bigger three-day intensive river clean-up was organised by the Ocean Crusaders so we joined with lots of other groups such as the River Canoe Club, Bankstown Council and the Cooks River alliance in a huge clean-up blitz. The focus of this even was in the water, either in canoes or with large barges which collected staggering amounts of plastic, and hard rubbish from the river such as numerous trolleys, countless bicycles, tyres and so forth. Held over three days, the final Sunday was the day when all the community groups came together, on the water and on the shore to finish the clean up and see how much rubbish had come out of the river! Well done to the Ocean Crusaders, the large contingent from the River Canoe Club, Mudcrabs and everyone who turned out on the day for this great initiative. It was a good few days before we saw any rubbish reappear on the river banks.

Bush Sites

Full reports from the bushland regeneration sites, but special mention this year goes to Michael Childs who has put in a monumental effort establishing a huge and well-tended site at the Sugar Mill near boat harbour. On national tree day they planted 400 saplings! This will also help to improve habitat areas for local wildlife. A few new sites have also sprung up thanks to the efforts of Gareth Wreford, you may have noticed them at Burnett Street, Warwick Reserve, Boat Harbour and Hursltone Avenue cliff face. Well done to all the site co-ordinators for their tireless hours of effort.



Callum - a regular volunteer at Rosedale

River Clean-ups

Mudcrabs co-ordinator Ranjith, has done an outstanding job again this year and added more regular river clean-ups in more locations to the Mudcrabs calendar. If you look at the table on page 3 you can see just how many sacks of plastic rubbish have been hauled out of the river. And this is even after the introduction of a container deposit scheme which is stopping a great deal of plastic

from entering the waterways. One day (clean up Australia day) 93 volunteers collected 55 bags of rubbish.

The Mudlarks:

Peter Munro and Jennifer Kent have initiated a bird-watching group to observe and document the huge variety of birdlife along the river. This has been growing in popularity and judging from their brilliant photos, they always see an impressive array of native waterbirds.

The CRVA is also involved with many community and government organisations and we are often the first port of call for media organisations, students and members of the public wanting to know something about the Cooks River. John Butcher has been working with Landcare for many years on the Marrickville Golf Course, and John has also been the cornerstone of the CRVA for the last decade, having been on the executive committee for at least ten years, seven of those as President. John will be stepping down from the executive this year, so we wish to thank him for his dedicated and patient work in so many areas relating to the river in all those years.

Canterbury Bankstown Council (CBC) Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC)

The CBC ESAC has a broad brief from looking at Council's support of electric cars to waste management. The CRVA continues to champion improvements to water quality and green spaces along the Cooks River.

Sydenham Bankstown Alliance (SBA)

The SBA is an affiliation of inner west community organisations fighting against over development associated with the Metro South West project. The CRVA participates in the SBA by providing comment on environmental aspects of various State Government development and infrastructure proposals and projects. See: <https://www.sydbankalliance.com/>

Management of native vegetation along the Cooks River

Canterbury Bankstown Council regularly whippers and sprays large areas of vegetation along the Cooks River. After several complaints, the CRVA has recently had a small win with Council agreeing to let native vegetation near Cup and Saucer Creek grow to its natural form. The CRVA hopes this precedent will influence the treatment of other native vegetation along the river.

Pemulwuy Trail

On 15 August 2018, the Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA) lodged a petition with Inner West Council that called for the establishment of a Pemulwuy Cooks River Trail. In response Council has engaged Tocomwall Aboriginal Consultancy "to undertake a critical investigation into the Gadigal and Wangal landscape" and that the "aim of this investigation is to build a wider and clearer understanding of the former landscape including the flora, the fauna, Aboriginal history, culture and heritage of the Inner West Local Government Area."

Council will also be establishing a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group. This group will also consider the Pemulwuy Cooks River Trail proposal and inform Council's response later in 2019. See: <http://www.gcpc2015.org.au/councils-response-to-proposal-for-pemulwuy-cooks-river-trail/>

Canterbury Racecourse

The CRVA continues to advocate for the future of Canterbury Racecourse as open green space for community use, and not apartment development, should the Australian Turf Club cease racing on the site. The CRVA also supports the efforts of local community group the Canterbury Racecourse Action Group (CRAG) who have a facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community-Organization/Canterbury-Racecourse-Action-Group-CRAG-942077892635098/>

Uluru Statement from the Heart reading

In November, it was uplifting to gather with about 40 CRVA members and friends, joining a national week of action to read and embrace the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Issued on 27 May 2017, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the people of Australia, the Uluru Statement presents a call for constitutional reform and recognition. We added our voices and our selfies to hundreds of others motivated by the 1 Voice Uluru campaign to listen carefully and act on this call: *"In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future."*



Statement from the heart gathering at Steel Park

So with all of these efforts, the question we are most commonly asked is "What's being done to improve the Cooks River, is it getting better or worse?" Drawing back the lens to about ten years ago, when much of the river had been turned into a series of concrete channels, it was regarded by many as just a polluted drain. Since then, more and more people have started to discover this natural haven so close to the inner city, and have been making concerted efforts to improve the river and foreshore. Sydney Water have started to turn their focus from cleaning the beaches to making serious and long term plans to improve the rivers, and the area around cup and saucer creek is testament those concerted efforts. The wetlands there are full of birds who can safely make nests and breed without being disturbed, and the stone banks that replaced the horrid concrete walls now look as if they've always been there. On a clear day the water sparkles, mullet leap and glisten from the surface, followed by big flocks of cormorants and pelicans. The mangroves are growing abundantly, creating shady green glades, and the dawn and dusk chorus of birds is a joy to behold. So yes, there is still much to do, but there is also much to celebrate in and around our beloved Goolayari and we hope to see you at some of our events and meetings in the coming year.

CRVA committee for 2018/19

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| President | Jennifer Newman |
| Vice-president | Ann Leahy |
| Secretary | Julie Corkery |
| Treasurer | Chris Shanley |
| Public officer | Chris Shanley |
| Publicity officer | Ann Leahy |
| Mudcrabs officer | Ranjith Evas |
| Committee members | Barney Solomon |
| | Garth Wreford |
| | John Butcher |



Golden sunset on the Cooks River

Mudcrabs Report

Ranjith Evas

Plastic litter in Cooks River continue to follow the downward trend compared to previous years due to the combined effect of Container recycling scheme and installation of litter booms at two locations at Cooks River. Below is the statistics of mainly plastic rubbish removed by our dedicated and tireless volunteers removed from the river at various locations in the past year.

| Date | Clean Up Site | # volunteers | # bags of plastic trash |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| 07/04/2018 | Racecourse | 20 | 25 |
| 21/07/2018 | Racecourse | 15 | 58 |
| 05/08/2018 | Robert St | 18 | 30 |
| 21/10/2018 | Robert St | 13 | 35 |
| 03/11/2018 | Racecourse | 17 | 50 |
| 01/12/2018 | Close St | 5 | 10 |
| 20/01/2019 | Close St | 18 | 33 |
| 03/02/2019 | Close St | 93 | 55 |
| 17/02/2019 | Racecourse | 24 | 25 |
| 21/04/2019 | Close St | 11 | 20 |
| 19/05/2019 | Racecourse | 24 | 25 |
| 06/07/2019 | Close St | 10 | 15 |
| Total | | 268 | 381 |

NSW state government and Federal government continue to drag their feet on tackling single use plastic pollution by using legislative measures. European Union has banned many of single use plastic items that end up in the environment with a starting date of 2021. Single use plastic pollution needs to be stopped at source. Clean ups by well-intentioned volunteers are not going to solve this problem. No multinational company will change their ways of producing single use plastic without paying for the environmental costs unless harsh legislative measures are applied. Consumer boycotts and individual behavioural changes have very limited impact unless it is done by majority of community members. We should be putting as much energy in advocating for legislative measures as we do for clean-up events.

I would like to thank our volunteers and site organisers who put in hours of work week after week contributing to the wellbeing of our planet and our community. Our special thanks to CRVA treasurer Chris Shanley who has done a successful fund raiser for Mudcrabs and is stepping down from the committee.



Volunteers at Clost St site



Volunteers at Robert St site

Continued support from Cooks River Valley Association is essential for Mudcrabs to exist and support the work of our volunteers. The staff and elected councillors at Inner west Council and Canterbury Bankstown council deserve special mention for their support in the past year. The Cooks River Alliance, River Canoe Club and Sydney Water have collaborated with our volunteers in organising clean ups this year. Well done everyone. I would like to thank Peter and Michelle who were organising clean ups at the Racecourse area of the river for over a decade since the start of our volunteer group.

The Mudcrabs have added two new sites for bush regeneration in the calendar which will be co-ordinated by Gareth. The Racecourse site will continue to have clean ups organised by Alison. Welcome to you both as site organisers. A new bird watching group called the Mudlarks is the new event happening in our calendar, thanks to Peter and Jennifer. Our struggle to protect our green open spaces like Barton Park and Racecourse site from unsuitable development continues as our fight for fair access for community members for access at Marrickville golf course.

Hope to see you soon along the shores of our beloved Goolayari for another year of volunteering.



Volunteers at Robert St. Lots of trolleys!



Volunteers at Racecourse Site



Pelicans of Goolayari

Report from Foord Avenue site, Hurlstone Park

Liz Millen

This has been a year of steady progress rather than dramatic change. At the time of writing (August) we have once again faced dry weather and have lost a few plants, however the western end of the site around the new 'creek' installed in 2017 goes from strength to strength, and the recently planted area near the bridge crossing is also going well.

This year we've bought a long ladder and been able to tackle some of the weeds that have had free rein on the previously inaccessible sandstone outcrop. We are trying to use fewer bags and to compost more weeds on site.

We are now attracting a greater diversity of birdlife, and regular visitors include the olive-backed oriole, sulphur-crested cockatoos and little corellas, as well as yellow-tailed black cockatoos. Occasional visitors this year have included king parrots, Eastern spinebills and a New Holland honeyeater.

Many thanks to all our regular and irregular volunteers, and to the energetic young people on Duke of Edinburgh and other school projects. It's great to welcome a new generation of bush carers! Thanks to Canterbury Bankstown Council for ongoing support with mulch, plants and equipment.

Last but not least - Foord Avenue boasts magnificent carrot cakes cooked each month by Irene Ladds – must be close to 100 cakes by now! A very welcome treat at the end of each working bee and a drawcard to working on this site. Thanks Irene for keeping us all going!



2018



2019



Ranjith at work on the ladder



King parrot

Rosedale Reserve summary of major activities 2018-19

Russell Cail

Over the past 12 months, in common with all groups, we have continued our battle with weeds, particularly madeira vine, farmer's friends and asthma weed. On the positive side though, we have certainly reduced their numbers and continued with an active planting program. Our aim as always is to introduce as much native variability to the site as possible, consistent with what plants were thought to exist in the area before white settlement. It is hoped that this variability will encourage wildlife to take up residence. To this end, this year we planted tea trees (*Leptospermum squarrosum*), hop bushes (*Dodonea triquetra*), rushes (*Juncus kraussii* and *Ficinia nodosa*), *Correa alba*, *Zieria smithii*, *Grevillea serica*, *Acacia falcata*, *Breynia*, *Hibbertia scandens*, various eucalyptus species (*E. tereticornis*, *E. longifolia*), barbed wire grass (*Cymbopogon refractus*), the hairy bush pea flower (*Pultenaea villosa*), and the sedge *Carex appressa*.

These plantings have been supplemented by some self-sown plants (wattles (*A. decurrens* and *A. longifolia*) and kangaroo apples – *Solanum* sp.). We have also been growing some of our plants from seed (*Hardenbergia violacea*) and transplanting brackens and *Kennedia rubicunda* (dusky coral pea). Through these efforts, we are increasingly achieving a more bush-like setting and the area is now supporting flowers through much of the year (see photo).



Banksia and New Holland Honeyeater

Last year's Christmas party was held at Rosedale. It was a joint effort and despite the hot and very windy day it all went well. About 35 people showed up and we enjoyed some good food and catching up with everyone associated with the Mudcrabs – no weeding involved.

This past year we dug in 2 more frog ponds (total now 6). We have had some potentially good breeding cycles of frogs but I am not sure how many survived the depredations of the skinks which seem to see the ponds as a kind of smorgasbord!

Sunday March 24th 2019, our working bee at Rosedale was held as part of the Wurridjal (mullet) festival, organised by Catarina Fraga Matos (CRA). In fact we did spot some mullet swimming in the river and a cormorant fishing. We were joined by a group led by Stephanie Clarke (National Parks). Fifteen volunteers turned up and we had a fairly relaxed start, with an Acknowledgment of Country, followed by a general safety awareness briefing. We then gave a short summary of our activities and plans for the Rosedale site. Despite the hot humid conditions, we had a very successful day.



Planting grasses for the Wurridjal working bee

We planted 100 barbed wire grasses (*Cymbopogon refractus*) at the far eastern end near the Korean club (see the photo) and weeded around our “frog” ponds. In addition to all this, we got a dozen or so bags of weeds. By this stage it was definitely time to knock off, relax, have some morning tea, sit around and have a good chat.

The Rosedale bird watching group, led by Alison has now produced a comprehensive table of sightings which lists the species, their numbers and general location throughout the year. This report is available upon request.

As for the future, we will continue with much the same program of preparing selected areas and planting them with species that we have determined are likely to do well in those areas. We also hope to establish some hives for native bees.

The Rosedale Group would like to thank Peter Goss from Canterbury Bankstown Council and the CRVA for their help, advice and provision of plants and tools, Catarina Fraga Matos (CRA) and Stephanie Clarke (National Parks) for helping to organise the Wurridjal festival activities and of course Brodie Smith from Council for supplying the food for the Christmas party. Joy and I would also like to thank all our dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who do such great work. Altogether our volunteers put in over 400 hours at our regular working bees, together with a further >300 hours spent during the week by some volunteers. We collected 128 bags of weeds, plus made some large piles of general mulch.



Joy, with new plants about to go in



Christmas Party 2018 at Rosedale Reserve

Gough Whitlam Salt Marsh Report

Russell Cail

The Gough Whitlam saltmarsh was constructed by Canterbury Council in 2007. Saltmarshes are an important and endangered ecological community that form on the landward side of mangroves, and provide valuable habitat for fish, crabs and birds. An interesting overview is provided in the reference: <http://www.mesa.edu.au/saltmarsh/saltmarsh02.asp>

In the last 12 months members of the Mudcrabs have met monthly to remove weeds, mulch, plant trees, shrubs and grasses to try and restore the area to something like that which existed before it became a tip in the 1900's. We have concentrated on the "islands" closest to the river. These raised areas present a very harsh environment, dominated by tall, mature casuarinas which suck the moisture out of the ground, very poor soil and salty winds which sweep across them, seriously negatively impacting the growing conditions. Accordingly, we have adopted a program of heavy papering and mulching to help conserve moisture, prior to planting these areas. We have selected plants adapted to these harsh conditions, primarily coastal tea trees (*Leptospermum laevigatum*), coastal banksias (*Banksia integrifolia*), native rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*) and Australian pig face (*Carpobrotus glaucescens*) in order to create an understory to attract and protect small birds and other fauna. It is hoped that by densely planting the trees and forming natural wind breaks with a layered system of branches and sticks and allowing the kikuyu to grow through them, we will protect the plants in the early stages of growth. The sticks also serve as habitat for lizards, insects, fungi, etc. So far the plan seems to be working, with first group of plants surviving some very hot, dry conditions earlier in the year. Some idea of this approach can be seen in the attached photos. In the future, these plants will be augmented with *Correa alba* which is said to be very hardy in coastal environments and anything else that looks to be hardy enough to survive.

The health of the marsh continues to be excellent with a typical mix of salt marsh species predominately; samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*), austral seablite (*Sueda australis*), streaked arrow grass (*Triglochin striatum*) and marine couch (*Sporobolus virginicus*). It is also home to lots of invertebrates (crabs and snails) which are attracting many wading birds.

We would like to thank Mr Peter Goss who is our regular contact at Canterbury Bankstown Council and who has provided the plants and much appreciated advice.



Ewen Park Bush Site

Keith Foulcher and Sue Bishop

After ten years of volunteers' efforts, the Ewen Park bush site is now very well established. Keith is the mainstay volunteer at the site and his weekly maintenance sessions keep things in good shape on a day-to-day basis. Working bees of other volunteers usually occur about once a quarter with the main activities being weeding, mulching and watering.

There were serious setbacks in the 2017/18 summer extremes and the ongoing drought creates challenges. Some parts of the site experienced significant plant destruction due to the weather, but this has created opportunities to diversify the plantings with new shrubs and trees provided by Peter Goss from the Canterbury-Bankstown Council. Additional new plantings have been made possible thanks to a donation of self-seeded stock from a local resident. This means lots of watering during the establishment phase which to date has been successful. We are also seeing lots of shrubs and trees self-seeding on the site.

Once the weather warms up, we plan to do more planting, subject to the likelihood of rain, and whether the soil is friable enough to take new plants.



Cuppa after weeding bee, 2019

Crab Walking

Martin Puchert, coordinator

The crab walking project is all about reducing the amount of litter polluting the Cooks River. It started in December 2017 with a grant from Inner West Council. The concept is simple: collect litter from streets in the river catchment so it can't wash into the stormwater system. Litter mainly gets into the Cooks River through stormwater.

The aim is to build a network of volunteers who each collect street litter, over and over again. Each volunteer is free to choose where, when and how often they collect litter. Every bit helps. The combined effort of lots of people doing this will have a big impact.

The project continued to attract enthusiastic new volunteers. Each volunteer was provided with a kit to use in collecting litter: gloves, litter grabber, high-vis vest and bags.

Volunteers record how much litter they collect and report it at the end of each month. The data can be used to map the litter being collected and identify problem areas.

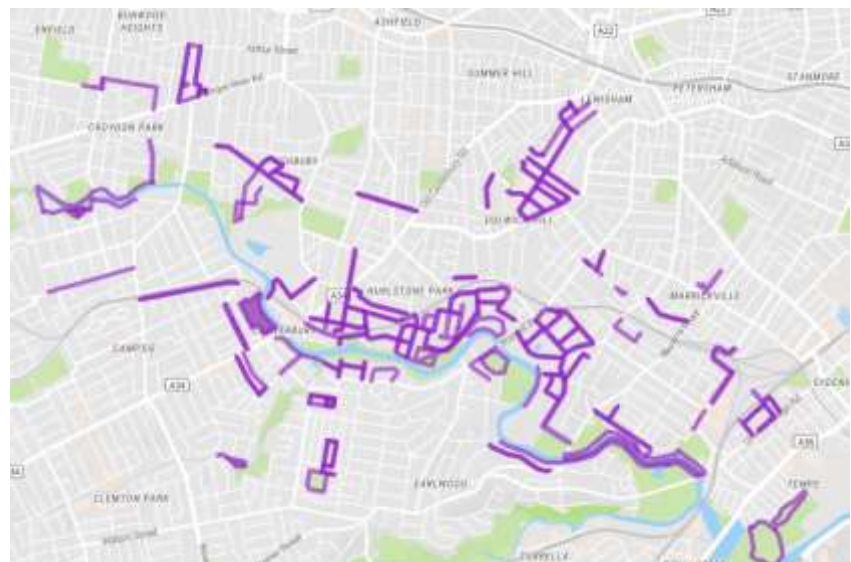
Volunteers also report other issues they have noticed, for example, discarded whipper snipper cords have been a widespread issue. Volunteer feedback has enabled problems to be brought to the attention of the relevant council, and improvements have been seen as a result.

Some of the previous volunteers found they weren't able to maintain involvement and dropped out. Those who have been involved found it a satisfying thing to do. Some comments from volunteers about their involvement:

"It's better than feeling helpless about the tidal wave of single-use plastic and litter destroying our oceans and future"

"It feels great to do my bit to help keep our streets and river clean"

*"Partly for the aesthetic improvement of our streets and partly to protect our local river, lead by example, exercise, profit from container collection, personal satisfaction, sense of stewardship, help wildlife...shall I go on?
An easy way to volunteer."*



Areas where volunteers collect street litter

Wave Rock

Peter Munro

The Wave Rock bush reconstruction site is located within Marrickville Golf Course, adjacent to the Cooks River. A dedicated group of Mudcrabs have been working at the site for more than six years. A wide range of sandstone and heathland plants have been established along with a variety of riparian vegetation. It is a difficult, narrow site with shallow soil, but persistence, hard work and caring for country have transformed the site into a much valued and appreciated natural asset. Thank you to everyone who has contributed over the past 12 months.



Wave Rock Site, 2019

Sugar Mill Site

Volunteers led by the tireless Michael Childs have made a huge difference to the Sugar Mill site this year. Thirty volunteers came to the working bee on National Tree day and planted over 400 plants on that day alone. Michael has also been propagating plants for the site, which is greatly increasing the local native species in this area, which in turn creates more habitat for native wildlife, in particular shrub birds such as wrens which benefit from the increased cover provided by dense small to medium shrubs.



The Mud Lark's Report

Jennifer Kent & Peter Munro

In February this year, the newly formed Mud Larks (an affiliated group of the CRVA) conducted their first bird survey on the Cooks River. The survey area ranges from Boat Harbour and Cup & Saucer Creek wetlands to the Wave Rock bush care site in Marrickville golf course and the Dibble Avenue Water Hole.

In the monthly surveys since then over 20 different bird species have been recorded, the most notable being Tawny Frog Mouths, Yellow Tail Black Cockatoos, Striated Herons and Royal Spoonbills. Low numbers of small birds, in particular the honey eaters, is a concern and probably reflects the lack of adequate understorey and dense vegetation. Jamie Honan's marvellous photography has ensured a valued pictorial record.



A local Mudlark



My guess is a female blue wren or a young male blue wren. The males lose their blue colour out of breeding season - Peter



Tawny frogmouth spotted near boat harbour

The Cooks River Catchment Coastal Management Plan (CRCCMP)

Peter Munro

CRVA representative (CRCCMP)

Since early 2018 the CRVA has participated in the development of a Cooks River Catchment Coastal Management Program. Directed by the Cooks River Alliance, this Program aims to integrate the management of the whole of the Cooks River catchment with its many stakeholders – Local Councils, several State agencies and other stakeholders.

When completed, this Program will have many positive outcomes and has the potential to integrate catchment wide action, with State Government backing, to improve ecological values of the Cooks River and promptly and efficiently address threats to River health. The Scoping Study has just been released for consultation and the full Program will take another 2 years to complete. This Program will address many of the concerns raised by the CRVA over many years and its successful completion is keenly anticipated.

New Mudcrabs Bush Sites

Gareth Wreford

Burnett Street Reserve

This is a new, large and terraced site with great potential. Early work has been completed clearing weeds and establishing edges to reduce the impact of Council spraying and mowing. Council has installed some coir logs to reduce stormwater run-off down the steep hill from Duntroon St. The site has some established trees and the focus is on understory, heath and groundcover planting along with ongoing weed control and some mulching.



Burnett Clean Up

Warwick Reserve

The North East corner of this small reserve at Canberra and Church Streets in Hurlstone Park is a Council approved bushcare site that has been planted and then replanted several times after Council has cleared it. As a result of further discussion with Council it will be resuming responsibility for maintaining the gardens. Many of the trees along the rail corridor are also marked for removal during the construction of Metro Southwest so it may be a few years before this site shows consistent progress.



Warwick Reserve Before



Warwick Reserve After

Boat Harbour

The Eastern end of this moist and shady site is established and work is progressing West towards the the Sugar Mill near the Sydney Water pumping station at the Karool Ave bridge.

Hurlstone Ave cliff face and Moser Reserve (Keir Ave)

These two sites began life under the previous Canterbury Council adapt-a-patch program and now require weeding and a general tidy up once or twice a year with the assistance of local residents.



Boat Harbour

Building Community in Ewen Park - End of a Vision

On Tuesday 30 April this year, a long-held vision of the CRVA for building community in the Cooks River Valley ended when Canterbury-Bankstown Council broke its 11-year commitment to provide a multi-function community building on the riverbank at Ewen Park.

Instead, the councillors unanimously resolved to provide a building in the Hurlstone Park town centre (on the site of the old bowling club). This may be of some benefit to the residents of the suburb of Hurlstone Park, but it is a bitter loss for the broad-based community of the Cooks River Valley, who use the riverland for walking, bike-riding, picnicking, children's informal play, and organised sport.

With increasing numbers of families living in apartments along the Sydenham-Bankstown corridor, Council should be prioritising facilities in green space, rather than in confined town centres.

The riverside location in Ewen Park is also a unique site expressing a strong sense of place in relation to the Cooks River. Situated in green parkland, it offers a beautiful view of the river and a focus on the importance of the river to all those living in and visiting the Cooks River valley.

In place of the riverside building (including toilet amenities) promised in the **2008 Plan of Management for Ewen Park**, Council is offering a slab with a shade structure, with no walls and no toilets. This shelter shed is grandiosely being called 'an outdoor education meeting space'.

Exposed to wind and rain, it is not a place where community could meet. It would also be useless for outdoor education classes, in which children need to sit at tables in order to draw, write, do craft etc, and facilitators need to be able to show power point presentations.

As such a structure would not meet any needs of the community, the CRVA at its general meeting on 25 June passed the following motion:

- 1. The CRVA sees no value in the construction in Ewen Park proposed at the 30 April 2019 meeting of Canterbury Bankstown Council, as such a structure would be useless either for community meetings or for outdoor education.*

Instead, the CRVA asks Council to upgrade facilities in the Ewen Park picnic area, as outlined in the Plan of Management and subsequent designs, including:

- two new picnic shelters with barbecues (one at the south-east corner and the other at the north-west corner of the picnic area)*
- the upgrading of the playground area, including provision of shade*
- additional planting of trees in accordance with a landscape design plan, with a set maintenance program for a minimum of three years*

- 2. The CRVA further opposes Council's proposal for the development of the flat open space of a 'Village Green' on the western side of the Ewen Park picnic area.*

The CRVA demands instead that Council preserve the current Ewen Park Picnic Area, with its mounds and trees and separate picnic spaces, as promised in the Plan of Management for Ewen Park (2008).

Thank you to community members and groups for your years of support!

With great sadness, I thank all those people who over many years have supported the vision for a community centre on the river at Ewen Park.

These supporters include the former Member for Canterbury, the Hon Linda Burney MP, who attended our Ewen Park picnics.

I thank the Canterbury Aboriginal Advisory group and the Wolli Creek Preservation Society. I thank the many award-winning children's authors and illustrators and storytellers, who came along to meet and entertain children at the Ewen Park picnics — including Libby Gleeson, Jeannie Baker, Julie Vivas, Duncan Ball, Ursula Dubosarsky, Richard Tulloch, and Pamela Freeman.

I thank my fellow co-ordinator of the Friends of Ewen Park, Sue Bishop, and the dedicated FEP team — Liz Millen, John Murn and Julie Corkery.

I thank Peter Munro, who represented the Mudcrabs as well as the CRVA in numerous meetings with Council representatives.

But most of all, thank you to the hundreds of community members who got behind this campaign, who signed the petitions, came to the picnics and the many planning workshops.

Nadia Wheatley
Friends of Ewen Park (an affiliated group of the CRVA)
Life member CRVA
Co-ordinator Friends of Ewen Park



Landcare Group – Marrickville Golf Course

John Butcher, Mudcrab and Landcare volunteer

This long-established site of remnant vegetation has been maintained and extended with monthly working bees by Landcare volunteers including Mudcrabs. The site is located beside the clubhouse and was commenced as a bushcare site by Marrickville Council in 1999.

The Landcare group's work increases the biodiversity of the site and of the Cooks River catchment and we occasionally glimpse the various forms of wildlife that live in the undergrowth and in the fallen branches and tree hollows. The golf course was nominated as a priority biodiversity area by the former Marrickville Council. A Plan of Management (PoM) for the golf course is currently being prepared by Inner West Council. The PoM will hopefully help increase biodiversity throughout the area.

Marrickville Golf Course Master Plan

Peter Munro

Following extensive community consultation, the Inner West Council released its Marrickville Riverside Parklands & Golf Course Plan of Management for public comment in March 2019. While one of the two options proposed (reduce the golf course to 9 holes) was very contentious, the CRVA was encouraged that both Option A (remain as 18 holes) and Option B (reduce to 9 holes) included many exciting improvements to the biodiversity of the



area, with increased plantings of trees, shrubs and native grasses, development of raingardens & bioretention areas, naturalization of the riparian zone, improvements to the river banks and increased general community use of the golf course parklands.

Unfortunately the management of the golf course persuaded the Council to include a third option after the public consultation had commenced. Option C requested that "there be no change" - no improvements should happen on the golf course for the next 10 years of the new lease. Additionally the Golf Course would continue to pump water out of the Dibble Ave waterhole to irrigate its fairways.

The CRVA ran a strong campaign to defeat Option C while encouraging members to make their own choice of either Option A or Option B. The results of the Council survey was a strong endorsement of the wish to make the proposed biodiversity improvements to the golf course. There were 1130 respondents with a combined 838 favouring Option A & Option B, while only 309 favoured Option C (no change). For survey results see:

<https://yoursay.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/marrickville-golf-course-and-dibble-avenue-waterhole>

This campaign is by no means over. CRVA members should take a keen interest later this year when Council will make its final decision on the future of Marrickville golf course as a potential biodiversity hotspot.

Summary for Publicity Officer

Ann Leahy

Despite very windy conditions, we had a record turnout for our Candles on the River at Steel Park, Marrickville. This is held during Earth Hour in late March and we make little paper boats, which are dipped in wax and fitted with a candle, then we send our little floatilla out onto the river at dusk. We could not proceed without the marvelous volunteers from the River Canoe Club, but despite a large number of canoes on the water and a big crowd of over 300 people, the wind was too strong to light the candles or for the boats to float out into the middle of the river. Let's hope for perfect conditions in 2020!



Candles on the River 2019 – photo Christopher Woe

We participated in Sydney Water's "Beat the Bottle" event in May which was held in Ewen Park and had a fabulous day cleaning up the river, with the added bonus of a coffee cart, live music and various information stalls including our own from Mudcrabs and CRVA. Teams of volunteers collected 200kg of rubbish from the riverbanks which included 314 plastic bottles, 277 lids, 183 cigarette butts and 250 plastic straws.



Volunteers at Beat the Bottle day

This was followed by another three day 'Paddle Against Plastic' - a massive river clean-up organized by the Ocean Crusaders who went down the river on barges pulling out old tyres, those dreaded discarded O-bikes and much more. We participated on the water and along the banks on the final Sunday and held an information stall to let people know what we do on the river. It was an amazing collaborative effort with around 200 people turning up, with 1,188 kg of rubbish collected in one morning. It was great to see such a willing collaboration of so many people and groups such as the Cooks River Alliance, Canterbury Bankstown Council and the River Canoe Club.



Some of the hard rubbish collected on the Paddle Against Plastic Day

It's clear that despite all the care and efforts put into cleaning up the river, even with the introduction of a container deposit scheme, there is still a long way to go to get rid of the rubbish and make the river completely clean and hazard free for waterbirds and fish.

Cooks River Valley Association Financial Report 1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019

Balance sheet

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Brought forward from previous year | 13,026.78 |
| Assets | |
| ING account | 11,198.04 |
| CBA account | 1,001.94 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | 12,199.98 |
| Liabilities | |
| Transfer pending from CBA account at 30 June 2019 | 800.00 |
| Net Assets | 11,399.98 |

Income and Expenditure

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Operational Income | |
| Bank interest | 180.52 |
| Membership fees | 1,205.00 |
| Donations | 1,187.00 |
| GST refunds | 86.00 |
| <u>Total operational income</u> | <u>2,658.52</u> |
| Income from Grants | |
| ANTaR Burwood | 2,000.00 |
| <u>TOTAL INCOME</u> | <u>4,658.52</u> |
| Operational Expenditure | |
| Insurance | 430.00 |
| Association fees | 46.00 |
| Support of affiliated groups | 1,710.19 |
| Post box and stationery | 130.00 |
| Events (Earth Hour) | 324.50 |
| Other expenditure | 430.96 |
| <u>Total operational expenditure</u> | <u>3,071.65</u> |
| Expenditure on Grants | |
| Crabwalker project; ANTaR Burwood | 3,213.67 |
| <u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u> | <u>6,285.32</u> |
| Operational deficit | 413.13 |
| Deficit from grants | 1,213.67 |
| <u>TOTAL DEFICIT</u> | <u>1,626.80</u> |

NOTES TO REPORT

“Other expenditure” includes purchase of a pelican rescue net; CRVA and Mudcrabs URL and web hosting.

Grant management is in deficit in this financial year, but we carried over funds from last financial year. In fact, both projects spent only the money allocated to them.

Our operational deficit is relatively small largely because we sought donations in early June 2019 and this led to an income of \$770.

Income from membership fees in 2019/20 will be less than this year, as a lot of people have already paid in advance.

If we continue to support Mudcrabs activities we will need to boost our income by fundraising in some capacity.

We have applied for a community grant with Canterbury Bankstown Council for tools and equipment for the Mudcrabs. This will help if successful, but there is no guarantee of this.

Chris Shanley - CRVA Hon Treasurer
15 July 2019

Thank you to John Butcher

Finally we'd like to thank and give special mention to John Butcher who will be stepping down from his official roles on the CRVA executive this year. John has been either President or an executive member for over ten years. He deserves a well-earned break and reduction in the amount of time and energy he has put into working and campaigning for the CRVA. John has been instrumental in working with councils and government bodies as well as the local community to draw up strategic plans for the river and to help to transform the river from a polluted backwater to a living and cherished haven. His tireless efforts have really helped to put the Cooks River back on the map. Thank you John!



John campaigning for the Container Deposit Scheme



A wonderful collaborative effort at the Paddle Against Plastic